

THE ROLE OF WOMEN WITHIN THE FISHING COMMUNITY OF DOMA DAM, NASARAWA STATE

D.M. Ogah, M. A. Abari, S.A. Dada, K.J. Yusuf, M. Usman & J.A. Umaru
College of Agriculture, Lafia

ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to assess the role of women in the fishing activities around the Doma dam fishing community. The study reveals that women participate in all fishing activities and play a significant role in family income generation from gear construction, fish catch, transportation, processing to marketing of the fish and fish products. Some limitations were identified in women participation such as some cultural practices, denial to participate in decision making, poor infrastructure and lack of organised markets. Women should be encouraged to freely participate and make decision so as to enhance their finances as it will translate to enhancing the family income.

INTRODUCTION

Fish and fisheries production constitute the cheapest sources of animal protein to man and remain one of his main sources of food. Ndok (1982) reported that fish constitute 40 percent of the diet of an average Nigerian. Many Nigerians leaving within the riverine areas engage primarily in artisan fishing as their main sources of livelihoods. This business in so many instance is look upon as men's business. Women are integral part of fishing business all over the world, from gear construction to marketing, despite their presence at all levels and in all areas of the sector, the role of women in small scale fisheries has remain unnoticed. Women work as crew member vendors, workers in the factory, researchers and much more. Their contributions to the sector reach far and wide yet this contribution has hardly been acknowledged. Many studies FAO (1986), Gnanadoss and Aderounmu (1982) have shown that women are very active in the production, processing and post handling as well as marketing of fish and fish products. This study is aimed at determining the role of women in fisheries and value chain addition to fish and fishery products in the settlement communities of Doma dam in Doma local government of Nasarawa state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

Doma dam is situated some six kilometres away from Doma town in Doma local government of Nasarawa state. The area lies 11.83° N and 8.33° E, annual rainfall is about 800-1100mm, temperature 27-37° C as minimum and maximum and relative humidity of about 76%. Doma dam is a man made lake and is structured into three arms each measuring more than 2 km in length and 300m in diameter. The lake is meant for agricultural irrigation by the Lower Benue River Basin Authority and since the inception of the dam in the late 1980s the surrounding of the dam has witness mass influx of fishermen who settle in clusters around the dam site. The major tribe are the Alago, Agatus and the Jukuns. The surrounding is hilly with thick vegetation, fishing is permitted in the dam with over 15 clusters of fishermen settlement around the dam including villagers from Alagye and neighbouring villages who fish in the dam.

Data Collection

The survey entails interviews with men and women involved in fishery activities. Preliminary interview with the women demonstrated that the role of women in the fishing community was better assessed by visit to the villages and camps surrounding the dam. Data used are also based on observations and informal discussions with women involved in fishing related activities in the study area and also informal interviews with randomly selected women within the area. Over six month period was used for this study October 2007 to may 2008.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1, presented the demographic representation of the respondents which range from 20 years to above 50 years old. Most of the respondents to this study were found not to exceed this age group because most of the inhabitants around the dam side move from neighbouring villages and different locations from and within the state to the dam side for fishing only, as they come to the dam side to fish and during off season they return to their villages, and this movement can only be performed by young and middle age people. 49% of the respondents were males while 51% were females.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Age class	NOR	Male	Female	%
20	32	22	11	11.55
21-30	63	26	37	22.74
30-40	80	26	32	28.88
41-50	76	32	44	27.43
51	26	8	18	9.39
Total	277	136	142	100.00
Marital status				
Married	179	76	103	64.62
Single	98	60	39	35.79

NOR= number of positive respondent

In the various fishing activities around the study site, women engaged in all the fishing activities from gear construction, catch, transportation, processing and marketing Table 2. Under gear construction 40% of women participated in construction of gear for the fishing, with transportation, processing and marketing of the fish products to be mainly the responsibility of women representing 90, 92 and 98% against men. This similar trend was reported in most small scale fishing communities particularly in riverine areas as reported by (FAO 1986, Gnanadoss and Aderounmu, 1982).

Table 2: Fishing activities by sex from the respondents

Activities	NOR	Male	Female
Gear construction	277	60	40
Fishing (catch)	277	80	20
Transportation	277	10	90
Processing	277	8	92
Marketing	277	2	98

Women in this area uses hooks, line, gillnet, cast net and traps for fishing. they usually fish in the morning and afternoon and withdraw to process and market what they catch including that of the men. Some women own fishing boats but all leave it under the care of a man or their children; some uses the boat as source of revenue for themselves through hiring. majority of women involved themselves in the catching and most are within the age limit of 20 to 30 years Table3. For gear construction only very young and elderly are involved. The major processing activity that is carried out in this locality is smoking salting and drying and these are majorly carried out by middle age women who are not involve in the catch; while transportation and marketing of the products were carried out by women groups between the ages of 21 to 30 years 48%.The main processing activities here is smoking and sun drying particularly of leftovers and those ones that will be kept for domestic consumption. since there are no electricity that would help in freezing the products.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of fishing activities by women according to age group.

Activity	<20	21 -30	31-40	41-50	>51	total%
Gear const.	20	2	10	58	10	100
Fishing (catch)	52	43	3	2	-	100
Transportation	30	38	26	6	-	100
Processing	8	9	52	16	15	100
Marketing	10	48	21	16	5	100

In Nigeria today the concern for increasing women economic participation can be seen within the wider general concern to alleviate the socio economic condition of poor household. This is more evident now that there is global economic melt down every nation is encouraging small scale business and empowerment in all facets of the economy. In the rural sector are several riverine villages and settlements with persistent poverty and deteriorating economic conditions. These have forced many women in the riverine community to work outside the normal status and ventured into varied economic activities while at the same time continuing to perform their traditional household roles. The major constrains of women identified here are that they are in no way involved in the decision

making, some cultural practices hinders their participation in some areas, poor infrastructure, and no organised markets

Although critical to the survival of the rural fishing community like the one studied women still remain largely marginalised and it is time that women should be given their proper place as an integral part of development. From all indications, social, traditional and cultural values particularly prevalent in these communities greatly limit the opportunity available to women to freely operate as most of them are forced to operate under men to be able to function properly.

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